



EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN LEBANON

**Election observation delegation
from 27 May to 21 June 2005**

**Report from the Chairperson of the delegation for election observation
in Lebanon,
Mr. Carlos CARNERO GONZÁLEZ**

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INTRODUCTION

Following the assassination of Rafiq HARIRI in February 2005, a strong mobilization of the Lebanese public placed significant pressure on the Lebanese political authorities, bringing consequences that would hardly have been possible to imagine some months before.

Syrian troops, present in the country since 1976, left Lebanon in the end of April 2005.

Under this framework, despite uncertainties persisting to the last moment, legislative elections were organized at the end of Parliament's mandate, within the delay allowed by the Constitution.

While these elections were first planned for May, due to the events following the assassination of former PM Rafiq HARIRI, they were postponed and did not occur until 29 May 2005, and lasted until 19 June 2005.

Despite attempts to adopt a new election law, it was the law adopted in 2000 which formed the legal background for these elections. This, as it could be observed, presented some difficulties which are addressed later in this report.

Parliamentary elections took place in Lebanon on four consecutive Sundays, in various regions of the country. Security concerns were cited as the reason that the elections did not take place in one day.

The Beirut area held the Nation's first elections on 29 May. On 5 June elections took place in South Lebanon, on 12 June they occurred in Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley, and on 19 June they were held in North Lebanon.

The Lebanese electoral system is rather complex. Under this system, confessional lists ensure the election of 64 Muslims (27 Sunni, 27 Shiite, 8 Druze and 2 Alawite) and 64 Christians (34 Maronite, 14 Greek Orthodox, 8 Greek Catholic, 5 Armenian Orthodox, 1 Armenian Catholic, 1 Evangelical and 1 candidate representing various "minorities" including Jews).

It must be noted that these numbers do not seem to be representative of the true breakdown of the Lebanese population, as there has been no census determining population distribution since 1932.

Candidates usually run as members of a list for their district, and each list must follow a predetermined sectarian distribution. It is, however, also possible to run as an independent candidate.

Since independence, ad hoc electoral laws have been used for each of the electoral processes. The 2000 electoral law used in the present elections, has been controversial from the beginning. The main reason for criticism of the law is the size of the electoral constituencies. According to the Taef agreement, "The electoral district shall be the Muhafazat" (governorate). At the time of Taef, Lebanon had 6 governorates, while it now has 8. The 2000 electoral law, however, divides the country into 14 electoral districts. This division affects the election results.

Following strong political pressure from the international community, on 4 May the Lebanese Council of Ministers decided to accept international election observers to monitor the elections.

Therefore, following a letter addressed from the President of the European Parliament to the Speaker of the Lebanese Parliament, offering a Parliamentary presence in this important political moment, the Conference of Presidents decided on 12 May 2005 to send a delegation of seven Members to observe the elections.

The list of Members who took part in this delegation is attached in Annex A.

An official European Union Election Observation Mission, led by Mr José Ignacio SALAFRANCA SÁNCHEZ-NEYRA, was set up to observe the elections in Lebanon. The European Parliament delegation and the EU-EOM worked in close cooperation, as is usual in these situations.

Before leaving for Lebanon, the delegation held a constitutive meeting on 24 May, appointing Mr Carlos CARNERO GONZÁLEZ as Chairperson and Mrs KRATSA as Vice-Chair. During this meeting, it was further decided that members of the delegation ought to be present in Lebanon for each of the four election weekends. In addition, the delegation agreed upon a programme for the first week end in Beirut.

The delegation also decided that the most important meetings with political authorities and candidates would be held on the first election weekend, and that the entire delegation ought to be present for the first and last Sunday.

After each election Sunday -- on 29 May, 5 June, 12 June and 19 June -- the delegation met to exchange views on the outcomes of the election observation, and discuss the programme for the forthcoming election.

1. THE ELECTIONS OBSERVATION IN BEIRUT ON 29 MAY 2005

The delegation of European Parliament observers to the first election in Beirut was composed of the Chair Mr Carlos CARNER, Ms Béatrice PATRIE and Ms Ana FOTYGA.

On Friday 27 May, Mr CARNERO, already in Beirut, was personally invited by the Chief Observer to join the programme of his meetings scheduled during the day.

Therefore, on behalf of the delegation, Mr CARNERO was invited to the following meetings:

- ✓ Briefing with the EC Head of delegation and EU ambassador on the political situation and possible scenarios for the elections.
- ✓ Meeting with Mr GEBRAN TUENI, Mrs NAYLA (René) MUAWWAD and Mr. Gabriel EL-MURR, candidates of the Christian Qornet Shehwan party who stood on the list of Sa'ad Hariri.
- ✓ In the afternoon a meeting was arranged with Sheik NA'IM QASIM, Hezbollah's deputy secretary general at the headquarters of the movement in the southern suburbs of Beirut.
- ✓ Meeting with the US ambassador, Mr FELTMAN, in which the position of the international community towards Lebanon in the eve of the elections was discussed.

On Saturday 28 May, the delegation was briefed by different EUEOM experts.

✓ **Briefings by various EUEOM experts - Saturday 28 May, 9.30 am, Hotel Mövenpick (Beirut)**

The briefing programme started with a general introduction given by Deputy Chief Observer Mr. Ricardo CHELLERI. The current security situation and the main concerns regarding this topic were discussed. Then, an overview of the media landscape and the situation in relation to freedom of speech was given, together with an explanation of the EUEOM mission's media coverage. The political history of the elections was also elaborated upon.

✓ **Meeting with Mr Najib MIQATI, Prime Minister - Saturday 28 May, 11.00 am, Grand Seray (Beirut)**

Mr MIQATI emphasized the importance of a reform programme for both the political and electoral system. He recognised the defaults in the electoral law, but said that its eventual reform was the responsibility of the Lebanese Parliament. He also explained that his administration is currently working on a reform programme to address these issues.

Mr CARNERO outlined the purpose of the election observation mission, insisting on its supporting role in the political process, and presented Members of the delegation of the European Parliament.

Mrs PATRIE pointed out that the Election Observation Mission had to be seen in the context of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, and that the EP was in Lebanon as a partner.

✓ **Briefings by the different EUEOM experts and the Head of the EC Delegation - Saturday 28 May, at 12.30 pm, Hotel Mövenpick (Beirut)**

Mr Patrick RENAULD, head of the Delegation of the European Commission, explained the role of the EU in Lebanon. Afterwards, Members were introduced to the legal and electoral framework, with explanations of the right to vote and the right to stand. The Briefing programme was completed with an overview of the role of Short Term Observers, the details about the deployment and the reporting, and an introduction to the Long Term Observer Teams for Beirut.

During the evening the delegation of the European Parliament was invited to a dinner hosted by the EC Delegation.

On the Sunday 29 May election day, the delegation split in two groups in order to observe. Both groups attended the opening of a polling station at 7 o'clock in the morning. A large number of polling stations, in various parts of town and from different confessional backgrounds, were visited during the day. The closing of the polling station, as well as the counting of the votes was attended by part of the delegation.

At the end of the day, members of the delegation met to exchange views on the outcome of their observation and on major conclusions to be drawn by this Election Day. Those reflections were later exchanged and shared with Mr SALAFRANCA, and a position of the EU-EOM, including input from the EP delegation was agreed upon.

On Monday 30 May the delegation proceeded, jointly with a delegation from the Spanish Parliament, to another series of interesting meetings with local authorities and political actors:

✓ **Meeting with President LAHOUD - Monday 30 May, 10.00 am, Baabda Palace (Beirut)**

Mr CARNERO presented the delegation of the European Parliament to the President and shared the experiences of the observers after the first Election Day. Mr CARNERO noted that a large number of voter centres had been visited and that the atmosphere was generally calm.

President LAHOUD insisted that the freedom of the press had been preserved in relation to election campaigning. In regards to the Hizbullah, he declared that Lebanon only has weapons to defend itself. In addition, the need to reform the electoral law was discussed.

Mr CARNERO invited the Lebanese, in the name of President BORRELL FONTELLES to take part in the Euromed meeting due to take place in November 2005 at the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the Barcelona Process.

✓ **Meeting with Saad HARIRI - Monday 30 May, 11.30, Qoreitem (Beirut)**

Mr CARNERO expressed his condolences to Mr Saad HARIRI, and repeated the European Parliament's condemnation of his father's assassination. He also congratulated Mr HARIRI upon his victory in the Beirut elections, where his coalition won a majority of 19 seats.

Mr CARNERO told Mr HARIRI about the experiences of the observers, who felt very well received by the Lebanese, and personally witnessed the desire for change expressed by many voters.

Mr HARIRI said to count on the EU to support the process of reform that should be launched after the elections.

✓ **Meeting with Patriarch NASRALLAH BUTROS SFEIR - Monday 30 May, 4.00 pm, Bkerke**

According to the Patriarch, the low participation grade in the Beirut election could be explained partly by the bad electoral law, and partly by the fact that an important number of Christian seats had already been decided upon before the elections. He expressed the hope that a new electoral law would increase the participation of Christian communities in the electoral process.

✓ **Meeting with General AOUN, Monday 30 May, 6.30 pm, Rabieh**

Mr AOUN condemned the Beirut elections. He declared that he would not work with those who collaborated with the Syrians during his absence. He insisted on the need to create a laic political system and to abolish the political clientelism. Mr AOUN expressed his intentions to have new parliamentary elections next year, once the new electoral law would be established.

Later on, during dinner, Mr CARNERO had a chance to meet with Mr JUMBLATT. They and exchanged views on the development of the situation in the country, and discussed possible expectations for the future.

During the same day, at 14:00, a press conference was held in order to issue the EU-EOM preliminary statement and to express, in the framework of the mission, the views of the EP delegation.

Of the 19 seats in Beirut, 6 members of the list Loyalty to Martyr P.M. Rafic HARIRI were already elected by default. The remaining 13 seats were also won by the list of HARIRI.

The EU-Election Observation Mission preliminary statement in Beirut on 30 May (Beirut elections of 29 May) is attached in annex B.

2. ELECTIONS IN SOUTH LEBANON, 5 JUNE 2005

The delegation of European Parliament observers to the second week of voting in the Lebanese parliamentary elections was headed by Deputy Chair Ms Rodi KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU (PPE-DE, Greece). It included Mr Panagiotis BEGLITIS (PSE, Greece), Baroness Emma NICHOLSON of WINTERBOURNE (ALDE, UK) and Mr Miguel PORTAS (GUE/NGL, Portugal).

On Saturday, 4 June 2005, the delegation received a thorough briefing from the Head of the European Commission Delegation, Mr Patrick RENAULD, as well as from the Core Team of the Election Observation Mission. They were also briefed by an International Crisis Group expert. The issues covered included both technical and general political questions, as well as the specifics of the South Lebanese electoral landscape and political situation. During a joint visit with the EU Head Observer Mr Ignacio SALAFRANCA, the delegation also met with UN peacekeeping authorities from UNIFIL in formerly Israel-occupied South Lebanon.

Following this, the delegation held an exchange of views with Mr Elias ATALLAH, co-founder, together with the late Samir KHASSIR (the journalist assassinated on Thursday, 2 June 2005), of a centre-left opposition party, and with Ms Bahia HARIRI running for election from the Saïda district. These political meetings were complemented in the course Saturday evening and on Sunday when the delegation met with other eminent representatives of civil society from the fields of rural development and micro-credit in the South, as well as with locally elected members of the main political parties of South Lebanon, i.e. Hezbollah and Amal.

Sunday, 5 June 2005 marked the electoral observation proper in the two big constituencies of South Lebanon. Out of the 23 seats, six had already been apportioned prior to the election due to uncontested candidacies. Although overall voter turnout reached 45% (thus clearly higher than the 28% witnessed in the Beirut vote of 29 May 2005), this did little to hide a number of regional, political-affiliation and religious disparities (despite a concentrated Shia presence in the region).

The delegation witnessed the opening of a polling station in the periphery of the Tyr region, near to a Palestinian refugee camp (some refugees having acquired Lebanese citizenship), and noticed a very low voter turnout. A different polling station visited next in the city centre had a better turnout. The delegation then moved on to the area under UN peacekeeping protection including the qadas of Nabatieh, and particularly those of Hasbaya and Marjayoun characterised by a higher degree of religious diversity (Shia, Sunni, Druze and Greek-Orthodox).

After a stopover at the Khiam prison (of major significance to the Hezbollah resistance movement) and the Fatima Gate (marking the Lebanon-Golan border), part of the delegation also followed the vote count in the village of Shebaa facing the symbolic Shebaa farms.

As expected, the results of the ballot held no surprises, with the tallied vote conferring an absolute victory and dominant position in South Lebanon for the Amal and Hezbollah movements who had formed a joint list (the "steamroller list") for the occasion, and had sometimes, depending on the electoral region, allied themselves with candidates running from other religious groups.

Members of the delegation were able to witness the "technical" proceedings of the Lebanese vote (seemingly hard to grasp at first sight) throughout the day, and their conclusions generally confirmed those already formulated by the European Parliament delegation observing the vote of the preceding weekend:

- well-disciplined and incident-free voting in those stations visited; nonetheless, underlying psychological pressure at some stations due to a lack of privacy contrary to the principles of a secret and free ballot; overall, the procedures (including the vote-count) and rules set out by the election law were observed; professionalism of local observers, at times overwhelmed by the sheer size of their task and their own small numbers: in this regard, the EU could concentrate more on training local observers within the framework of electoral assistance;
- poorly legible ballot papers and electoral lists; rigidity of the electoral system based on the 2000 electoral law, which distributes seats according to a constrained religious-based logic denying real political contest among the candidates and parties; reform of the electoral law should be the priority of the newly elected Parliament;
- lack of political competition, 6 seats out of 23 having already been assigned prior to the vote for want of competitors, which in part explains the high abstention rate in some regions; lack of a true list of contenders; massive coverage of election posters with pictures of the running candidates, mainly for Hezbollah, as well as numerous posters with the Iranian spiritual leader, Ayatollah Khomeini.

Of the 23 seats for South Lebanon, 4 seats were won by default by members of the Development, Liberation and Resistance list (DLR), a joint list of Amal, Hizbullah and the Movement for the Future. The DLR list also won the remaining 19 seats.

The EU-Election Observation Mission assessment of the election-day in South Lebanon (5 June) is attached in annex C.

3. ELECTIONS IN MOUNT LEBANON AND BEKAA VALLEY ON 12 JUNE 2005

The team was composed of Mrs GUTIÉRREZ-CORTINES, Mr BEGLITIS, and Mr PORTAS, accompanied by one staff member and an interpreter. The team was able to visit five polling stations in the following locations: Metn (near Beirut), Jounieh, Byblos, and Baabda.

At the tour's start a security official advised the delegates to avoid the region of Chouf, in light of apparent violence occurring between different political factions in the area (this information later proved erroneous). Thus the observation team decided against a visit to Chouf on this mission.

The rate of voter participation in the Mount Lebanon region was higher than on the preceding Sunday elections; 54% of eligible voters turned out to the polls in Mount Lebanon, and 49% in the Bekaa Valley. Two delegates also present at the previous weekend's elections, Mr. BEGLITIS and Mr. Portas, stated their opinion that here one could sense a "real electoral battle" taking place.

Unlike the previous Sunday (June 5), this election saw Lebanese military officers on duty near and police within the polling stations.

Noticeably present were supporters of General Aoun, a group comprised mainly of young people. These supporters wore orange-coloured clothing in a move similar to the Ukrainian elections.

In general, it was noted that access to the polling stations proved difficult for the disabled, due to the fact that these offices were often located on the second floors of schools.

Particular points to draw attention to:

- ✓ Representatives of political factions informed the ad-hoc delegation that in some instances hundreds of electoral cards were never distributed to voters, despite the fact that these cards had been requested on time. The delegation passed this information on to the chief observer of the EU, M. Salafranca and his team on the same day.
- ✓ The delegation was also told that money had in some amount been paid to citizens by political factions, in an effort to secure votes. Disputes over such accusations led to discussions of escalating volume in front of the polling stations as the closure of the election premises approached.
- ✓ At Jbeil, voters were required to not only sign their ballots, but to place their thumbprints on their cards.

The delegation was present at the accounting of the ballots in one the polling stations. It believed that the procedure was completed in satisfactory manner.

A briefing with the EU's Chief Observer Mr SALAFRANCA took place that same evening after the elections.

In the Bekaa Valley, the Baalbeck Harmel list of Hizbullah and Amal won the majority of the 23 seats. In Mount Lebanon seats were divided between Aoun's Change and Reform list, that won 15 of the 35 seats and Jumblatt's Unity of the Mountain list.

The EU-Election Observation Mission assessment of the election day in Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley (12 June) is attached in annex D.

4. ELECTIONS IN THE NORTH LEBANON ON 19 JUNE 2005

For the fourth and final weekend, when elections were organized in North Lebanon, the EP delegation was composed of the following members: Mr Carlos CARNERO GONZÁLEZ, Mr Ioannis KASOULIDES, Ms Cristina GURIÉRREZ-CORTINES, Ms Béatrice PATRIE, Ms Emma NICHOLSON of WINTERBOURNE, and Ms Anna FOTYGA.

The delegation met in Beirut on Saturday 18 June. The EU election Observation mission briefed Members of the delegation on the situation in the country following the votes on the three previous weekends.

The results of the elections in North Lebanon and Bekaa valley, where general Aoun had an unexpected victory, were particularly emphasized, especially in view of the elections in the North.

After that briefing a precise deployment plan was agreed amongst members of the delegation.

On Sunday 19 June, Election Day, the delegation was divided in three different groups which observed, all day long, polling stations in various parts of the north region.

The deployment plan had been conceived in order to allow the various groups to visit polling stations in areas of different religions, namely Maronite, Greek Orthodox and Muslim.

All groups were therefore able to witness voting procedures, and to develop an idea of the situation in this area.

At the end of the day, the delegation met in Beirut in order to exchange views on the various observations and to agree on a common line regarding the outcome of the elections.

The delegation noted that despite a very short preparation time, the elections took place in a well-organized manner. Indeed, the elections were headed by police supervision, and in certain cases even saw military oversight.

The critical issues rising from the Sunday 12 June 2005 elections were confirmed. These included the fact that competing political factions accused one-another of paying money to voters. In addition to this problem, the name of a certain elector showing an electoral card was not found in the electoral register

Mr CARNERO presented the draft preliminary statement of the EU mission to Members, to be issued on the following day at a press conference. After a careful analysis of the document, the delegation agreed to convene to the EU mission, in order to add some remarks to the draft statement. The delegates also hoped to discuss potential issues to be raised by the Head of the EP delegation during the press conference, and to highlight other sections of the EP report to be addressed after the elections.

Finally, in the evening the delegation organized a dinner to which Mr SALAFRANCA and the Representative of the Commission in Beirut, Mr RENAULD, were invited, in order to allow an exchange of views regarding the outcome of the elections and future perspectives for Lebanon.

Allies of Hariri's Future Movement won all 28 remaining seats in the last elections.

The preliminary statement of the EU mission is attached in annex E.

The composition of the newly elected Parliament is attached in annex F.

CONCLUSIONS

The delegation to observe the parliamentary elections in Lebanon on 29 May, 5, 12 and 19 June 2005:

- ✓ wishes to thank the Lebanese authorities for their cooperation and assistance throughout this long electoral process;
- ✓ recalls that the ad hoc delegation to observe the elections in Lebanon was conducted in close cooperation with the European Union Election Observation Mission led by Mr José Ignacio SALAFRANCA, Member of Parliament;
- ✓ commends the EU-EOM for its analysis of the election preparations, its monitoring of the media, its organisation of short-term observers, its handling of logistics and its analysis of the results;
- ✓ fully shares in the conclusions of the EU-EOM preliminary statement, which is a comprehensive part of this report;
- ✓ bearing in mind the mobilisation of the Lebanese society after the assassination of former PM Rafiq HARIRI, and the departure of the Syrian troops according to the indications of the UN Security Council Resolution 1559; welcomes the fact that the elections took place within the delay allowed by the constitution;
- ✓ considers that under the current election law, the elections were well organised within the time allotted; emphasises that they must be seen as a transition towards a new electoral system;
- ✓ welcomes the outcome of the elections, as all major Lebanese political coalitions participated in the voting process, although many voters boycotted them at the end;
- ✓ believes that there is strong evidence that the current electoral system possesses shortcomings, and that it needs to be reformed by the new Parliament; therefore, without questioning the results of the present elections, considers them rather as a transition towards a more efficient electoral system;
- ✓ is convinced that, respecting the wish of the Lebanese people, in the spirit of the Taef Agreement, a new political system should allow parties and coalitions to base themselves upon common political interests and not only confessionalist or religious grounds;
- ✓ welcomes the intention to revise the electoral law expressed by authorities and various coalitions throughout the election process, and believes that pursuing this political commitment should be a priority after the elections;
- ✓ encourages political coalitions that have worked together since the assassination of HARIRI in February to continue in this spirit of cooperation towards political reforms;
- ✓ praises the participation of all political coalitions in the electoral process; calls for a permanent dialogue to be set up between them;
- ✓ deplores the absence of a law regulating on the financial aspects of campaigning, and believes that the setting of campaign spending limits should be considered;

- ✓ deplors the fact that in many cases, when candidates have been previously selected, elections took place without real contest or open and transparent competition; considers this undermines the electoral process, shows its inadequacy and decreases the democratic value of the process;
- ✓ regrets the absence of women amongst polling committee officials; believes that equality between men and women is a fundamental value in all democracies;
- ✓ is concerned that the lack of pre-printed ballot papers and lack of voting secrecy affected the transparency and fairness of the process, particularly in relation to the elderly or illiterate;
- ✓ believes that the huge presence of candidate supporters outside of polling stations, although taking place in a peaceful atmosphere, allowed a certain level of intimidation and pressure on voters, and did not enhance the credibility of the process;
- ✓ urges the new government to update the voter register and voter cards; suggests the establishment of an independent body responsible for organising the elections, a task currently exercised by the Ministry of Interior, in order to improve general faith in the independence of the elections;
- ✓ believes that a lowering of the voter age should be considered, especially as young people displayed their political involvement and desire for change in the aftermath of the February events;
- ✓ invites the EC to increase the promotion of democracy in Lebanon, under the framework of the EIDHR programming for 2005-2006; this should include civic and voter education, public awareness campaigns, support for domestic election observers and support for media; this should also include assistance to election reform;
- ✓ in order to follow up the progress made by the new parliament and government in the months following the elections, suggests that this report be followed by a joint hearing in the European parliament, in which all major Lebanese political actors should be present, and involving the Committee on Foreign Affairs, the Delegation for relations with the Mashrek countries and the *ad hoc* delegation for observation of the Lebanese elections.

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS IN LEBANON

ELECTION OBSERVATION DELEGATION

27 May - 20 June 2005

List of participants

Members

Mr Carlos CARNERO GONZÁLEZ (*Chairman*, PSE, Spain)
 Ms Rodi KRATSA-TSAGAROPOULOU (PPE-DE, Greece)
 Mr Ioannis KASOULIDES (PPE-DE, Cyprus)
 Ms Béatrice PATRIE (PSE, France)
 Baroness Emma NICHOLSON of WINTERBOURNE (ALDE, United Kingdom)
 Mr Miguel PORTAS (GUE/NGL, Portugal)
 Ms Anna FOTYGA (UEN, Poland)

Substitutes

Ms Cristina GUTIÉRREZ-CORTINES (EPP-ED, Spain)
 Mr Panagiotis BEGLITIS (PES, Greece)

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Mr Hans-Hermann KRAUS
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Abbreviations :

EPP-ED	European People's Party/European Democrats	GUE/NGL	European United Left/Nordic Green Left ID
PSE	Party of European Socialists	UEN	Union for Europe of the Nations Group
ALDE	Alliance of Liberal and Democrats for Europe	I-D	Independence/Democracy
Verts/ALE	Greens/European Free Alliance	NI	Non-attached



**European Union Election Observation Mission to Lebanon
Parliamentary Elections 2005**

**Preliminary Statement, Beirut elections
Beirut, 30 May 2005**

The EU Election Observation Mission welcomes the opportunity granted by the Government of Lebanon to observe these landmark Parliamentary Elections. The EU EOM has stressed from the beginning that, in accordance with international standards for election observation, it is following the elections in a neutral manner and without interference in the process. In line with these standards, the mission has decided not to give an evaluation of the overall process while the elections continue. This preliminary statement therefore gives only an overview of the pre-election environment and election day findings in Beirut. A detailed assessment of the whole parliamentary election process will be presented after the last election day on 19 June.

Introduction

The election in Beirut on Sunday 29 May 2005 was the first in a series of four polls to be held in Lebanon's Parliamentary elections.

The elections are taking place in the aftermath of political turmoil, the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, large popular demonstrations, the formation of a new government and the withdrawal of Syrian armed forces from Lebanon. Overall, the general political environment is marked by pluralism and free debate and, in the last few months, people have shown a remarkable civic spirit and restraint in the difficult period following the assassination of Rafik Hariri. However, the political mobilization earlier this year did not continue into the election process which was characterized by a resumption of traditional political bargaining.

19 parliamentary seats represent the three constituencies of Beirut; six in Beirut I, six in Beirut II and seven in Beirut III. By the deadline for the submission of candidate applications on 12 May, 51 candidates had registered to run in the election. Only one coalition fielded complete lists in all three constituencies, while others contested only some of the seats. Following the withdrawal of 17 candidates, nine of 19 seats were won uncontested before election day. This limited the voters' choice.

It was decided to hold the elections largely in line with legal deadlines, which meant that there was no time to discuss and elaborate a new election framework. Parliament failed to agree on adopting an existing draft election law, one which differed mainly on the size of electoral districts. The elections were thus held on the basis of the current electoral law, adopted in 2000. The EU mission will provide a detailed analysis and assessment of this law after the completion of the elections.

The EU EOM wishes to extend its gratitude to the government of Lebanon for excellent co-operation, and to the Lebanese people for the warm welcome given to all observers without exception.

Election Day

On election day on 29 May, a total of 420,630 voters were registered to vote in 780 polling stations across the three constituencies of Beirut.

Forty teams of EU EOM observers visited a total of 372 polling stations, representing 47,7% of all polling stations in the three constituencies of Beirut. EU observers were also present at the Registration and Higher Registration Committees in Beirut for the first and second levels of the tabulation and aggregation of results.

- Polling took place in a calm and orderly manner, with no major incidents occurring during the day.
- The EOM observed the opening of 31 polling stations. The implementation of opening procedures was assessed positively in 79% of observed cases, while in 21% minor irregularities were observed.
- 306 polling stations were observed during voting. Few cases of voter intimidation were recorded. Polling procedures were evaluated positively in 80% of polling stations visited, with only minor irregularities in the rest.
- The presence of campaign material both inside and immediately outside polling stations was one of the main shortcomings observed during both opening and polling. Campaign material was present in 64% of polling stations observed.
- Observers reported that in several cases party representatives were also serving as polling station committee members. Even if not envisaged by procedures, this effectively increased transparency during polling.
- A large police presence was observed in 82% of cases. This was probably due to a large number of polling stations located inside one building.
- There were serious access problems for disabled and elderly voters in 94% of polling stations visited.
- The secrecy of the vote was secured in 88% of observed cases. This represents a marked improvement from what was reported in previous elections. In addition, there were very few reports of voters being turned away from polling stations because their names were not on the voter lists.
- 35 polling stations were observed during the count. Procedures were assessed as good in 83% of cases observed, with only a few minor procedural discrepancies in the rest.
- EU EOM observers were present at both the first and second levels of the tabulation and aggregation of results. The process was open and transparent and conducted in accordance with established procedures.
- The EU EOM welcomes the adoption of the media Code of Ethics. However, during the period of media silence, some electronic media broadcast messages that violated the agreement.

- The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE), a national election observation organisation was, for the first time since its creation in 1996, granted 150 observer accreditations from the Ministry of Interior. Domestic observation plays an important role in the transparency of any electoral process. The EU EOM welcomes the decision by the MoI to accredit domestic observers, and encourages it to accredit an even greater number.

The EU EOM will continue to observe preparations for the elections on 5, 12 and 19 June, and will remain in country until early July.

EU EOM Background

The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) has been in Lebanon since 11 May 2005, following an agreement between the EU and the government of the Republic of Lebanon. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which outlines the rights and responsibilities of observers, was signed between the Lebanese government and the EU on 14 May 2005.

The Mission of 116 observers is led by a Chief Observer, Mr. José Ignacio Salafranca (Spain), a Member of the European Parliament. It is made up of a Core Team of 11 experts at the central level, 26 Long-Term Observers (24 from EU member states, two from Switzerland), 62 Short-Term Observers (50 from EU member states, 10 from Canada and 2 from Switzerland), and four Locally-Recruited Short-Term Observers from EU member state embassies in Lebanon. In the framework of the established successful cooperation between EU institutions, a Delegation of the European Parliament led by Mr. Carlos Carnero González (Spain) also joined the EU EOM on 27 May. Seven Members of the Spanish Parliament were also associated with the Mission.

END

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**European Union Election Observation Mission
Parliamentary Elections - Lebanon 2005**

PRESS RELEASE: EUEOM/2005/05

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ASSESSMENT OF ELECTION DAY IN SOUTH LEBANON

BEIRUT, 6 June 2005

Thirty-nine teams of European Union election observers visited a total of 335 polling stations, representing 26,7% of all polling stations in the two electoral districts of South Lebanon. EU observers followed the opening of polling stations, voting, closing and counting, and were also present at the Registration and Higher Registration Committees for the first and second levels of the tabulation and aggregation of results.

23 parliamentary seats represent the two electoral districts of South Lebanon; twelve in South Lebanon I and eleven in South Lebanon II. Six of the 23 seats were won uncontested before election day. This limited voters' choice. 669, 758 voters were eligible to vote in 1, 257 polling stations.

Polling took place in a calm and orderly manner, with no major incidents occurring during the day. On average, turnout was higher than in Beirut. Observation findings largely match those of the first election in Beirut on 29 May. No major irregularities were observed and the poll was adequately organised by the election administration.

In 17% of stations visited during polling, the polling station did not meet the necessary quorum of president, secretary and two assistants.

Candidates' lists were absent from the entrance of polling stations in 83% of observed cases.

Polling station staff's understanding and implementation of polling procedures was evaluated positively in 91% of polling stations visited.

As in Beirut, the presence of campaign material both inside and immediately outside polling stations was one of the main shortcomings observed during both opening and polling.

Understanding and implementation of counting procedures was assessed positively in 91% of observed cases. However in 23% of observations (7 of 31 stations), results were not posted at the polling stations after being announced. Nevertheless result forms were distributed to candidate representatives and observers.

EU EOM observers were present at both the first and second levels of the tabulation and aggregation of results. The process was open and transparent and conducted in accordance with established procedures.

The EU EOM also noted breaches of the 24-hour media silence, outlined in the Code of Ethics.

Because the electoral process is still ongoing, the EU EOM will issue its comprehensive assessment of the Parliamentary Elections only after the election on 19 June.

The EU EOM is led by Chief Observer, Mr. José Ignacio Salafranca, a Member of the European Parliament from Spain. It is made up of a Core Team of 11 people, 26 Long-Term Observers (24 from EU member states, two from Switzerland) and 62 Short-Term Observers (50 from EU member states, 10 from Canada and 2 from Switzerland). In addition, four Members of the European Parliament, led by Mrs Rodi Kratsa-Tsagaropoulou (Greece), joined the EU EOM for the election in South Lebanon.

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**European Union Election Observation Mission
Parliamentary Elections - Lebanon 2005**

PRESS RELEASE: EUEOM/2005/07

Date: 13/06/05

**ASSESSMENT OF ELECTION DAY IN MOUNT LEBANON AND THE BEKAA
VALLEY**

BEIRUT, 13 June 2005

Thirty-nine teams of European Union election observers visited a total of 341 polling stations, representing 13,6% of all polling stations in Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley. EU observers followed the opening of polling stations, voting, closing and counting, and were also present at the Registration and Higher Registration Committees for the first and second levels of the tabulation and aggregation of results.

Unlike the elections in Beirut and South Lebanon, the third phase of the parliamentary elections was highly contested. The pre-election environment was characterised by intense competition between candidates and political groups. Of the 58 parliamentary seats representing the electoral districts in Mount Lebanon and Bekaa, only two had been won unopposed prior to election day. 1,227,362 voters were eligible to vote in 2,501 polling stations.

The general environment of these elections was more tense, given their competitive nature. There were isolated incidents of violence between rival supporters in several areas, but they were quickly resolved. Overall, polling took place in a generally peaceful manner.

In the run-up to election day as well as on election day itself, the European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) received an increased number of allegations of vote-buying from rival candidates and political groups. It also witnessed several attempts of vote-buying, and noted problems with the distribution of voter cards.

In the Bekaa, some candidate representatives were unable to access polling stations to be present for the start of the polling process due to delays in receiving their accreditation.

Polling officials' understanding and implementation of polling procedures was evaluated positively in 87% of polling stations visited.

There was a large presence of campaign material inside and particularly outside polling stations.

The majority of observed polling stations presented serious access problems for elderly and disabled voters.

EU EOM observers were present at both the first and second levels of the tabulation and aggregation of results. The process was open and transparent and conducted in accordance with established procedures.

There was a larger presence of domestic observers compared to the election days in Beirut and South Lebanon. The Lebanese Association for Democratic Elections (LADE) fielded a total of 640 domestic observers in Mount Lebanon and Bekaa, of whom 417 were accredited. Domestic observation plays an important role in the transparency of any electoral process, and the EU EOM welcomes the increased number of accredited observers.

The EU EOM noted breaches of the 24-hour media silence, outlined in the Code of Ethics.

Because the electoral process is still ongoing, the EU EOM will issue its comprehensive assessment of the Parliamentary Elections only after the election on 19 June.

The EU EOM is led by Chief Observer, Mr. José Ignacio Salafranca, a Member of the European Parliament from Spain. It is made up of a Core Team of 11 people, 26 Long-Term Observers (24 from EU member states, two from Switzerland) and 62 Short-Term Observers (50 from EU member states, 10 from Canada and 2 from Switzerland). In addition, three Members of the European Parliament joined the EU EOM for the election in Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa.

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**European Union Election Observation Mission to Lebanon
Parliamentary Elections 2005**

Preliminary Statement

Elections well-managed, but election framework in urgent need of complete reform

Beirut, 20 June 2005

Summary

- The elections were well-managed and took place in a generally peaceful manner within the existing framework for elections. However, there is an urgent need for complete reform of the election framework. While it was legitimate, in order to respect the Constitution, to organise elections according to legal deadlines under the existing election framework, it is now vital to address the fundamental shortcomings of the electoral system and bring it in line with international obligations, such as the UN International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR).
- The elections took place in a pluralistic context in which political forces were able to campaign and register candidates. The campaign became more competitive with each of the four phases of the elections, with a marked increase in political mobilisation in the run-up to the third and fourth election days.
- The election administration under the Ministry of Interior was committed to delivering the technical aspects of the election process on time.
- On election days, polling generally took place in an orderly and calm manner.

However, there are key concerns which need to be addressed:

- It is widely recognised in Lebanon that the election framework should be overhauled. While the question of confessional distribution of seats raises wider issues, it is clear that the current system does not respect the principle of equality of votes. Also, the delimitation of electoral constituencies does not respect this principle.
- The absence of adequate campaign finance regulations and of proper legislation concerning the media has contributed to an uneven playing field during the election campaign, discouraging political forces and independent candidates who do not possess sufficient means to campaign. The media were able to cover many viewpoints, but coverage was rarely balanced.
- People vote at their place of registration, usually the location of family origin, rather than the place of current residence. Although the location of registration can be changed, there are difficulties in doing so. This encourages the system of patronage.
- The absence of pre-printed uniform ballots creates opportunities for manipulation and can compromise the secrecy of the vote.

Introduction

The European Union Election Observation Mission (EU EOM) has been in Lebanon since 11 May 2005, following an agreement between the EU and the government of the Republic of Lebanon. A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), which outlines the rights and responsibilities of observers, was signed between the Lebanese government and the EU on 14 May 2005.

The Mission of 116 observers is led by a Chief Observer, Mr. José Ignacio Salafranca (Spain), a Member of the European Parliament. It consists of a core team of 11 experts at the central level, 26 long-term observers (24 from EU member states, two from Switzerland), 62 short-term observers (50 from EU member states, 10 from Canada and 2 from Switzerland), and four locally-recruited short-term observers from EU member state embassies in Lebanon. A Delegation of seven Members of the European Parliament led by Mr. Carlos Carnero González (Spain) also joined the EU EOM for the four election days.

Legal Framework

- The electoral system in Lebanon is defined by the unwritten National Pact of 1943 and the Taif Accord of 1989, with its consociational structure and allotment of confessional seats in Parliament. The legal framework consists of the Constitution of Lebanon, the Election Law of 2000 and other relevant laws and regulations. While recognising the pluralistic and multi-confessional nature of Lebanon, the legal framework nevertheless contains shortcomings that fail to meet both constitutional provisions as well as standards set out in the UN International Covenant for Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), to which Lebanon is a party.
- Debate on possible amendments to the Election Law of 2000 continued into the election campaign period. No political consensus was reached on any changes. Earlier on 28 April 2005, Parliament extended its own mandate to 20 June (the day after the last election).
- Universal suffrage is not fully implemented. Army and police officers are prohibited from voting. In addition, there is no legal provision to give the homebound or hospitalised, public servants on duty on election day and election officials the possibility to vote. Nor is there any provision for overseas voting.
- Due to the different size of electoral constituencies and the number of seats assigned to each, the number of votes needed to win a seat varies from approximately 12,000 to 47,000. This results in unequal suffrage rights for voters.
- The absence of adequate campaign finance regulations and of proper legislation concerning the media has contributed to the creation of an uneven playing field during the election campaign.
- The legal framework does not provide for a structured, comprehensive system for legal redress. Various institutions have ill-defined and sometimes overlapping competencies for the adjudication of complaints, and procedures are not defined in detail by legislation. The resulting system is non-transparent, barely accessible to voters and seldom results in effective legal remedies.

Pre-Election Environment

- The 2005 Parliamentary Elections took place in the aftermath of political turmoil, the assassination of the former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri, large and opposite popular demonstrations, the formation of a new government and the withdrawal of Syrian armed forces from Lebanon. The period of political

upheaval was reflected in a general reshuffling of political alliances, which continued into the election campaign itself.

- The 2000 election law was the subject of much debate. Opposition to this law, as well as the political upheaval after the assassination of Rafik Hariri, resulted in a short pre-election period. The election dates were announced by a Presidential decree on 5 May. The campaign period was very short, particularly for the contestants running in the three constituencies of Beirut on 29 May.
- The holding of elections on four consecutive Sundays and the public announcement of results after each election day influenced the subsequent elections and limited the possibility for equal campaigning.
- The assassination of the prominent journalist, Samir Kassir, in a car bomb in Beirut on 2 June once again brought to the fore in public debate the role of Lebanese-Syrian security services. At the same time, electoral negotiations between Aoun and Jumblatt broke down, and there was increased polarisation between the "Bristol Gathering" (Qornet Shehwan, Hariri's Future Movement and Jumblatt's Progressive Socialist Party) and Aoun's Free Patriotic Movement and its allies.
- While the elections in Beirut and South Lebanon were marked by a lack of competition and limited voter choice, the elections in Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa Valley and North Lebanon were highly contested. Nine of Beirut's 19 parliamentary seats and six of South Lebanon's 23 seats had been won uncontested before polling day. For the third election, two seats had been won unopposed before election day, while in the North all seats were contested.
- During the election campaign and on election days themselves, EOM observers received a substantial number of allegations of vote-buying from rival candidates and political groups. Observers also directly witnessed a few attempts at vote-buying.

Election Administration

- The Ministry of Interior is responsible for the administration of the elections at a central level. Other institutions, such as the Ministry of Education, as well as Lebanon's governors, sub-governors and *mukhtars* take part in the organisation of selected parts of the electoral process. In this context, the absence of an independent body for the administration of the election results in overlapping powers and a lack of uniformity in the implementation of legislation. Although the Ministry of Interior administered the electoral process in a satisfactory way, several shortcomings were observed.
- There is a lack of clarity and detail regarding several crucial aspects of the electoral process. The processing and delivery of voter cards is not sufficiently regulated, and resulted in numerous complaints and allegations of discrimination. The role played by *mukhtars* as facilitators and by political forces as proxies here does not guarantee the impartiality of the process.
- Voters are required to vote at their place of registration, usually the location of family origin. Although it is possible to change the place of registration, cumbersome bureaucratic procedures and social pressure make it a difficult process. Since voters therefore have to travel on election day from where they live to where they are registered, the way is open for political forces to selectively provide transport and other incentives. The main consequence of the requirement to vote at the place of registration is the entrenchment of the system of patronage, based on confession.
- There were a large number of complaints and appeals about the voter card system, including application, scrutiny, production and delivery. In part, this is due to the creation of unreliable voter/elimination lists as extracts from the civil record. The lack of correct and timely updates to the voter register particularly affects married women who have recently changed their surname.

- The 2000 Election Law provides for the appointment of only two polling station officials. While these individuals are assisted by four voters and sometimes candidates' representatives, this is insufficient to safeguard the integrity and credibility of the overall polling and counting procedures. A more coherent training of all election officials must be assured with regard to future elections.
- The practice of using non-standard ballots, in particular those prepared by candidates and distributed by campaigners at polling sites, seriously compromises the secrecy of the vote.

Media coverage

- In general, the media¹ gave wide coverage to the candidates, alliances and electoral lists. TV programmes organised debates and talk shows, and newspapers included election sections.
- In the absence of any regulation for the media during an election campaign, the EU EOM welcomes the Code of Ethics initiated in May by the Ministry of Information and the Conseil National de l'Audiovisuel (CNA) and adopted by the main national media. The Code of Ethics, an attempt to guarantee accurate, fair and informative media coverage of the elections, is a positive step.
- In the first two phases of the election, all TV media devoted almost all of their coverage of contestants in those elections to the "Martyr Rafik Hariri" list in Beirut and the Amal-Hezbollah "Resistance, Liberation and Development" list in South Lebanon. The tone of coverage was positive. For the election in Mount Lebanon and the Bekaa, Aoun's "Reform and Change" lists received the greatest share of coverage by all media, closely followed by Jumblatt's lists. While the tone for Jumblatt's lists was largely positive, Aoun's lists received a large amount of negative coverage. For the North, Hariri's lists received the largest share of airtime with an overall positive tone.
- The Code of Ethics provides for a media silence 24 hours prior to election day. The EU EOM observed an increasing number of breaches of the media silence over the course of the four elections.
- The essence of the freedom of the press and freedom of expression surrounds some pending legal cases against journalists for alleged defamation.

Election Days

Overall, EU EOM observers visited a total of 1,308 polling stations, representing 22% of all polling stations in Lebanon. The main findings on the four consecutive election days are as follows:

- Polling officials' understanding and implementation of polling procedures was assessed positively in 88% of observed cases.
- There was a large presence of campaign activity inside and particularly outside polling stations, perhaps creating an intimidating environment for voters.
- In 16% of over 1,000 observed polling stations, voters in possession of a voter card were turned away. This raises questions regarding the accuracy of the voter register, and the efficiency of the administration.
- In 10% of over 1,000 stations at the time of visit, the polling station did not meet the necessary quorum of president, secretary and two assistants. In over 1,300 polling stations visited, none of the polling station presidents were female.

¹ The EU EOM monitored 5 TV stations: Tele Liban, NBN, Al Manar, Future TV, LBCI, and 3 newspapers: An Nahar, As Safir, Al Mustaqbal

- The majority of observed polling stations presented serious access problems for elderly and disabled voters.

Recommendations

- The electoral law should be completely revised. Discussion on a new electoral law should start soon and must be inclusive, engage state institutions, political representatives, civil society and citizens. It should take into account both the Constitution, national laws and international obligations for elections.
- The creation of an independent election administration is strongly advisable, together with the introduction of a coherent system of laws and regulations to adequately support all aspects of the electoral process. The functions of the *mukhtar* in relation to the electoral process should be performed by civil servants receiving a regular salary.
- Elections in the future should be held on a single day as foreseen by law, in order to provide equal opportunities for voters and contestants.
- Measures should be taken to improve the quality of the legislation and administration of the voter register.
- Limitations on the right to vote for army and police officers should be abolished. Provisions should be introduced to enfranchise the homebound and hospitalised, election officials and public servants on duty on election day, in order to make suffrage as universal as possible.
- Campaigning should be forbidden on election day within a given perimeter around polling centres and polling stations. Campaigning should be also strictly forbidden inside polling stations, and candidate representatives banned from wearing propaganda material inside polling sites.
- Official uniform ballots should be introduced to enhance the secrecy of the vote. This would also allow for the cross-checking of numbers during reconciliation and counting. Provisions on burning ballots after the count should be repealed, allowing for a recount in case of complaints.
- An entire polling station committee should be appointed and receive proper training in advance of election day.
- A system for efficiently dealing with election-related complaints should be put in place, involving a transparent and efficient judicial track which would allow voters, candidates and polling station committee members to obtain legal redress. The highest level of an independent election administration should be ultimately responsible for the resolution of election-related complaints. Polling station committees should be given the power to adjudicate every complaint related to voting procedures on election day. Alternatively, the judiciary might be involved in the resolution of complaints, in which case the delimitation of jurisdiction between the election administration and court system would have to be clearly defined.
- Financial disclosure should be mandatory for all candidates, and should be audited by an independent body at the end of the elections. The setting of campaign spending limits should also be considered.

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- Proper media legislation should be introduced. It should regulate equitable access to the media for political parties and candidates, incorporate elements of the Code of Ethics, and give executive power to the independent body for the regulation of the media.
 - The right of domestic and international observers to observe elections should be clearly stated in law. At present, there are no regulations in place regarding their accreditation and there are no rights guaranteed by law, such as accessibility to all polling stations and to all phases of the electoral process including the tabulation of votes.

The EU EOM will present a detailed analysis of recommendations in its final report on the 2005 Parliamentary Elections in the near future.

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Lebanese Parliament after the 2005 elections

Political Movement	Number of Seats
Movement for the Future (Hariri)	35
Amal	15
Progressive Socialist Party (Jumblatt)	14
Hizbullah	14
Free Patriotic Movement (Aoun)	14
Lebanese Forces	6
Qornet Shehwan	6
Popular Bloc (Skaff list)	5
Tripoli Coalition	3
List Michel Murr	2
Syrian Social Nationalist Party	2
Renewal Democratic Movement (RDM)	1
Kataib	1
Baath	1
Democratic Left Movement	1
Independent Candidates (pro-Hariri)	6
Independent Candidates (anti-Hariri)	2
	128